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CHAFEE ANNOUNCES \$8 MILLION IN BIO-TERRORISM PREPARATION FUNDS FOR RI

PROVIDENCE, RI – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee today announced that the state of Rhode Island will receive \$7,944,089 in bioterrorism funding under a recently approved anti-terrorism spending bill.

“Events since September 11th have demonstrated our vulnerability to bioterrorist threats. The evacuation of various government buildings, and the deaths of several citizens, shows that we are underprepared to meet this challenge,” Chafee said. “This funding will help our hospitals and public health officers ramp up their preparations, to ensure that we have much less to fear from those who would use anthrax or smallpox to threaten death and destruction.”

The funds will be used to develop comprehensive bioterrorism preparedness plans, upgrade infectious disease surveillance and investigation, enhance the readiness of hospital systems to deal with large numbers of casualties, expand public health laboratory capacity, and improve connectivity between hospitals, and city, local and state health departments to enhance disease reporting.

The Legislation

On December 20, 2001, Congress gave final approval to legislation -- the Defense Appropriations bill (H.R. 3338) -- which includes \$20 billion in emergency spending for homeland security, bio-terrorism preparation, increased defense needs, and other efforts to combat terrorism.

Specifically, H.R. 3338 included the provisions of the Bioterrorism Preparedness Act (S. 1765), which was authored by Senator Bill Frist (R-TN) and co-sponsored by Senator Chafee. In all, H.R. 3338 included \$1.1 billion to fund states' bio-terrorism preparations.

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The Funding

Funding will be divided into two parts. The first portion will be provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is targeted to supporting bioterrorism, infectious disease, and public health emergency preparedness. Rhode Island will receive a total of \$7,294,764 from the CDC.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will provide the second portion of the funding, which Rhode Island will use to create regional hospital plans to respond in the event of a bioterrorism attack. Rhode Island will receive a total of \$649,325 from HRSA.

The Rhode Island Disaster Initiative

Additionally, at Senator Chafee's behest, H.R. 3338 also included \$3 million in funding for the Rhode Island Disaster Initiative (RIDI), which is designed to address current shortcomings in disaster medical preparedness. The RIDI proposal is a research effort intended to study current systems and assess technologies and techniques to determine effective solutions to problems in disaster response. Current research indicates serious shortcomings with existing initiatives.

In the FY 2001 budget, Senator Chafee secured approximately \$1 million in federal funds to carry out Phase I of the project, which involved a statewide vulnerability assessment. Phase II, which is funded by the money included in H.R. 3338, takes information from Phase I research to develop and test feasible emergency disaster response scenarios.

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